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Mary Hartwell Catherwood's portraits of women in late nineteenth century

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by

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century American literature produced many women writers, some of whom were very successful and wrote a number of widely read, best selling novels. A few, but not many, even created long lasting and enduring work. Most of the novels written by women were sentimental stories that appealed mainly to women who at that time constituted a major portion of the novel-reading audience. The reason little of their work endured was their tendency to look for the successful formula, then repeat it, writing for the easy sale and quick profit. Not all women authors wrote for quick fame and the immediate best seller. Many wrote because they had some point to make to the reading public, or they felt driven to express themselves through literature.

A popular author whose books are widely read can reflect social values of the period in which she lives, and show changes in values as they occur. Mary Hartwell Catherwood was writing during a period of change in the United States: the Civil War occurred when she was in her teens; Blacks were granted freedom from slavery; women were organizing to fight for the right to vote. The country had gone through an industrial revolution that had changed and shifted the social structure of society as rapidly as machines had changed and shifted manpower and labor in industry.

For many women, the change in social order and life styles was imperceptible; for others, it was drastic and difficult. For a few who sought changes in the social order to gain more freedom for women, the

change was worth the risks to their reputations and security. For others, a change in their life style and any threat to their security was abhorrent and frightening.

How one woman saw these changes as they affected the role of women in 19th century society is the subject of this thesis. Mary Catherwood saw three roles for women. In one, the woman was the housewife confined to the house, especially the kitchen. In another, she had more freedom to be active outside the house. In the third role, the woman was her husband's pet, allowed little freedom outside the house but "thoughtfully" relieved of all responsibilities in the house.

After this brief introduction, Chapter II will be a short biography of Mary Hartwell Catherwood and an account of her writing and publishing credits. Chapter III is a discussion of the versatility and range in her writing. Chapter IV is devoted to a closer look at Mary Catherwood's writing and how she portrayed women in her stories. A conclusion of Chapter IV expresses what I believe Catherwood was showing her readers about the roles of women, indicating which one she thought was most appropriate for women of her time.

CHAPTER II. A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

Mary Hartwell was born to Dr. Marcus and Phoebe Hartwell on December 16, 1847, in Luray, Ohio, where Dr. Hartwell practiced medicine for ten years. In 1856, he moved his family, a wife and two daughters, Mary and Roxanna, to a comfortable home in Milford, Illinois. Within a few months he contracted pneumonia and died on January 27, 1857. Soon after his death, Mrs. Hartwell gave birth to a son, Marcus, named for his father. Mrs. Hartwell died just a year after her husband, February 3, 1858.

Immediately after the death of Phoebe Hartwell, the children's maternal grandfather had himself appointed their legal guardian and returned with them to his home in Hebron, Ohio. Jesse Thompson, the children's grandfather, was not well-to-do, and the children felt the sting of poverty during their childhood and adolescent years. Mary, Roxanna, and Marcus were educated in the public school in Hebron, and although little credit can be given to the school for Mary's intellectual growth, it provided the place where her literary career began. She craved mental stimulation and literary activities beyond the limited scope of Hebron, so largely on her own, she started writing poetry. Much later when asked how old she was when she first wanted to write, she replied, "I think it must have been when I was in my cradle."[1]

According to Robert Price's article, "Mrs. Catherwood's Early Experiments with Critical Realism," childhood was very difficult for Mary.

> That period she always remembered, for reasons not wholly clear, as most unhappy and humiliating. Hebron, like all the other corn-belt communities she described, was probably no worse than any of its fellows in the Middle West of the period. But she always thought of it as odious and degenerate.[2]

Many bitter experiences with poverty marred her girlhood and young womanhood as she grew up in small towns in Illinois and Ohio. M. L. Wilson's Biography of Mary Hartwell Catherwood states:

> Miss Hartwell was uniformly of a bright and happy disposition; but there were times when poverty and her environment griped her, and so obstructed the path of her aspirations that she would feel, and give expression to, bitter reflections and sadness.[3]

In 1867, Mary, with the help of her friend and publisher M. L. Wilson, arranged for her sister to leave Hebron and go to Galveston, Texas, to live with an aunt. She, however, was unable to persuade her grandparents to permit Marcus to leave until he was twenty-one. At that time, Mary went to Hebron and brought her brother back to Indianapolis where he completed his education before moving to California to live with Roxanna and her husband.

Mary sought not only mental activity but physical activity as well. She enjoyed nature and being outdoors. This love of nature became apparent in her description of settings for her stories. Mary's ambition drove her to work hard at school, and, consequently, she became a very good student obtaining a teacher's certificate at thirteen years of age. Because of her youthful appearance, however, she did not find a teaching position until the following year when she was fourteen.

Mary started writing poetry when she was ten years old and continued to write only poetry until 1862 when she met M. L. Wilson, publisher of the Newark (Ohio) American and he suggested she try writing prose, too. Mary had sent some of her work to Wilson who, impressed with her talent, forwarded one poem, "Pocahontas," to a children's magazine in Philadelphia. When the poem was published in 1863, she received two dollars and fifty cents,[4] her first earnings from writing.

The years between 1861, when she was fourteen, and 1865, when she entered college, were financially and emotionally hard for Mary. Finding herself on her own at fourteen, she secured a job teaching in a small school in Jersey Township, Luray County, Ohio, and did whatever writing she could whenever she could. She received encouragement from acquaintances and friends, but it is believed she received little support from her family as she was separated from them. In 1864, her first story was published. During the years that she taught school, she stayed in the home of Judge and Mrs. Green, who became like parents to her. Dr. Green is quoted in a letter in the Wilson biography as writing:

> On one occasion, when Mary was staying with us, we drove to a near-by station to meet an old aunt of mine, who came to make us a visit. Mary and the children were with us. On returning, the aunt inquired if these children were all mine. I said 'Yes, all mine.' Mary told me afterward how glad she was to hear me say that, for now she felt she had a father. Ever after that she called me 'father.'[5]

Mary received comfort and assistance from the Greens for the rest of her life and signed her letters to them, "Your foster daughter."[6]

Her determination to secure more information was finally accomplished when in 1865 she entered the Granville, Ohio Female College. With the help of Judge Green and Professor W. P. Kerr, president of the institution, it was arranged that she would be able to take four years of courses at the school's expense. It was understood that this was a loan to be repaid as soon as she was able to do so. She studied very hard and completed the required course of study in three years, graduating with honors. She also repaid the debt to the college in less time than anyone else who had been educated under a similar plan.

After receiving her diploma, she realized that her education was not complete but had only prepared her for the more difficult courses in the "World's University." She was faced with a large debt and no help or support from her family. The ambition that had driven her to work for scholastic excellence now became a motivating force as she worked for the perfection of her craft, and it appeared to create for her a seemingly endless supply of energy to pursue her profession while she worked to repay her debt to the college. Whatever fame and fortune she would acquire, she must accomplish on her own. She had overcome a difficult and unhappy childhood and felt ready for further challenges.

When she was tenty-one and had graduated from Granville College, Mary taught at the Granville Public School for a year before moving on to the Danville Public School in Illinois where she remained for about five years. Although teaching occupied most of her time, she found time to write as often as possible. In 1871, she won a $100 prize for a short

story published in Wood's Household Magazine. In the fall of 1874, Mary quit her teaching position and went to Newburgh, New York, to write for Wood's and other magazines. Several short stories, about one a month, were published in Wood's.

Following her success in Newburgh, she went to Cincinnati to write for The Ladies Repository, Golden Hours, and other magazines. Her success there with children's stories encouraged her to try writing more stories for an adult audience. During the time she lived in Cincinnati, her first novel, A Woman in Armor, was written and published.

The economic depression of 1873 forced many publishers out of business, and Mary had to abandon free-lance writing and return to relatives in a small town in Illinois. For Mary, the necessity of living with relatives was difficult, not only because she had learned to appreciate her independence, but because she retained her dislike for some of the characteristics of middle western small towns. Robert Price says:

> Furthermore, her stories of this region (Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois) although they later assumed a characteristic coating of sentiment and glamorous retrospect, passed through an early stage of development especially between 1878 and 1882 when they were concerned largely with recording of the unpleasant present as the author herself had experienced it in various farm and small-town communities.
>
> Mrs. Catherwood was to have a lifelong dislike for much that was characteristic of Middle Western rural communities. Although she was probably the first woman west of the Alleghenies to win self-support as a writer, she had done so only by the severest of efforts against very difficult odds. There had been a series of unusually bitter experiences during girlhood and young womanhood

> in various Ohio and Illinois villages. Between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty . . . . She escaped from this environment just long enough to have a pleasant taste of something more congenial as a successful free-lancer . . . .[7]

The resentment she felt is apparent in some of her stories written in the late 1870s in which she describes life on the farm and in a small village with the sharp bite of critical realism.

While in Illinois, in 1877, she renewed a friendship with James Steele Catherwood whom she had met several years earlier when her aunt had married a relative of his. They were married on December 17, 1877, when Mary was thirty years old. Shortly afterward, they moved to Indianapolis.

In Indianapolis, Mary had more time and opportunity to pursue her literary and intellectual interests. She accepted a position as a drama critic for the Review, a local paper. She also published many short stories. Because of her writing and her interest in literary societies, Mary became well-known in Indianapolis and formed friendships with many people recognized for their intellectual abilities. One was Benjamin S. Parker, who was at that time the American consul at Sherbrook, Canada. He invited her to visit his family in Canada, an opportunity which she would take advantage of later. It was also at this time that she met and formed a very close and lasting friendship with James Whitcomb Riley. She and Riley collaborated on The Whittleford Letters, but the book was never published. Mary and Riley were associates in the Indianapolis literary group which later included Booth Tarkington.

Until 1878, she had modeled her writing after what was popularly acceptable. But in 1878, her writing took a different turn when it became more critical in content. With the addition of this critical element, Mary's writing became more distinctive and less sentimental. Her long-time discontent with the social structure of small towns and villages as she had observed and experienced it as she was growing up; with the bitter hopelessness she had known and seen as it surrounded the poor and poverty stricken in these small towns; with the undignified, cruel greed and competition she watched develop as small towns rapidly grew into cities, now found a release in her writing.

This critical strain and critical satire are apparent in "The Monument of the First Mrs. Smith"[8] and a serialized story "A Little God,"[9] both published in the Kokomo Weekly Dispatch. It is easily seen in "The Career of a Prairie Farmer"[10] published by Lippincott. Mary's use of realism in critically describing the small town of Barnet, the setting for Craque O Doom, her second novel, caused Robert Price to say it was probably "The first of the Winesburgs to appear in literature."[11]

During 1878 the first of her book-length children's stories, "The Dogberry Bunch," was published in Wide Awake. This and several later stories appeared in book editions. As an author of children's stories, Mary Catherwood achieved notable success.

The independence that Mary learned as a child and that she maintained through the years prior to her marriage was not to be denied or repressed

because she married. She had been able to support herself until the depression of 1873 forced her to fall back on the generosity of relatives, and she had found this independence stimulating and necessary for her emotional and mental survival. According to Wilson, she could not be restricted by the mundane duties and repressive, but socially accepted, roles of housewife or housekeeper. She needed the stimulus of active, imaginative, intelligent people. She remained active in the literary groups she so thoroughly enjoyed, and she continued to write prolifically.

In 1880 and 1881, Mary began to write of small towns, the people in them, the manner of behavior, the way of talking, and other characteristics indigenous to the region. Her ability to realistically recreate this color of a locality about which she was writing earned for her a reputation as a literary artist. It was between 1880 and 1881 that "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," the first of her corn-belt local color stories was published, The Dogberry Bunch was reprinted, and her prolific pen produced many poems, articles, and critical reviews. Also Craque O Doom, her major work of critical realism was serialized in Lippincott's, then published as a novel.

In 1882, she and her husband moved to Hoopeston, Illinois, where they resided for the next seventeen years. This was the year that Mary added to her corn-belt color stories with "Serena," published in Atlantic Monthly, and "Queen of the Swamp," published in Harper's Christmas.[12] She also wrote a few short stories for Lippincott's, several juvenile short stories for various magazines, and numerous dramatic reviews for the Indianapolis Saturday Review.

Tragedy struck the Catherwoods in 1883 when their first child, a son, died in infancy. Her writing was neglected for several months. In late 1884 a daughter, Hazel, was born. During the summer between the death of her son and the birth of her daughter, Mary accepted the invitation of Benjamin Parker and visited St. John's, New Brunswick, Canada. While there she became interested in French-Canadian history as a source for story material. She enjoyed the celebration of St. John's Day with the Parker family and subsequently spent a great deal of time studying characters and scenes in New Brunswick province which gave her the historical material necessary for her next novel, The Romance of Dollard.

The following years found Mary in Indianapolis, active in forming the Western Association of Writers with James Whitcomb Riley, Maurice Thompson, and others. She was not neglectful of her own writing during this time, for The Romance of Dollard, the first of her historical romances based on French-Canadian history, was serialized in Century. She had researched her subject well, and Francis Parkman, in his introduction to the book, attested to the authenticity of the historical facts while giving Catherwood credit for giving America a new fiction when she added the touch of a fictional romance to an interesting and dramatic historical event. Seven editions of the book were eventually published. Within two years she wrote two more stories about the French-Canadian affiliation, The Story of Tonty, and The Lady of Fort St. John, the latter first

serialized in the Atlantic Monthly, then published in book form. At the same time, this energetic woman wrote several children's stories, a novelette, and a number of articles for a variety of publications.

During the summer months, the family vacationed at a summer resort, usually on Mackinac Island. These vacations were a respite from work for Mary; but she did not rest, for she played as hard as she worked. If she was admonished to relax a bit, or rest awhile, she quickly retorted, "I'd rather wear out than rust out."[13] In 1891, Mary toured Europe with her six-year-old daughter as her only companion. They journeyed through England, Scotland, France, and Germany while Mary gathered historical material for future work.

In 1893 at the Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, Mary was asked to read a paper before the Congress of Authors. Her paper titled, "The Technic of Fiction, or Form and Condensation in Novel Writing," was considered important enough by Rossiter Johnson to be included, in part, in his history of the event. This was the kind of occasion Mary very much enjoyed, not only because of the literary importance but also for the social opportunities afforded. There were a few occasions when Mary had to decline these invitations and opportunities because either her domestic duties or her literary work simply did not permit her to attend. But she seldom stayed home because of household tasks. It was during one of these occasions that she met and formed a friendship with Eugene Field.

In 1893 Mary continued to write prolifically, for she turned out two book-length stories, Old Kaskaskia, first serialized in the Atlantic

Monthly, then published as a novel, and The White Islander, serialized in Century Magazine before being released as a novel. She also wrote two short stories.

In 1894 the Century Company commissioned Mary to do a study of the life of Joan of Arc so she, her husband, and her daughter traveled to France where she did extensive research. Her papers on the subject of her research appeared in Century Magazine at the same time that Mark Twain had a series in Harper's titled "Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc." Her experiences on this tour resulted in a very practical article for anyone traveling to France. It was "French Roads and Road Markers," and was published in the Atlantic Monthly and was reprinted by many other magazines throughout the country.

The same year a collection of her short stories, The Chase of St. Castin and Other Stories, about French Canadians in the area around Mackinac and the Great Lakes, what was then known as the northwest, was published. Many of the stories in this collection had appeared earlier in the Atlantic Monthly.

From this time until her death, Mary kept busy writing and publishing three more novels, The Spirit of an Illinois Town, expanded from a short story, The Days of Jeanne d'Arc, and Lazarre. She also finished two collections of short stories, The Queen of the Swamp and Other Plain Americans, a collection of local color stories about the middle west, and Mackinac and Lake Stories about French Canadian trappers, Indians, the settlement of the Mackinac region of Canada and the upper Mississippi

area in the United States. She continued writing short stories, poems, articles, and children's stories.

In 1899, after twenty years of marriage, Mary and her daughter moved to Chicago to be closer to her publishers and to provide better educational facilities for her daughter. They lived in an apartment that remained Mary's home in Chicago until her death. James Catherwood's job as postmaster and his real estate business kept him in Hoopeston, but the family spent weekends together whenever possible.

In the fall of 1902, a few months before her death, Otis Skinner produced and appeared in Lazarre, a play based on her story. The play was only nominally successful, but her book was quite successful and was selling well all around the country.

Even as death approached, Mary did not lay down her pen. She had finished another novel, "The Bois-Brûlés," that was serialized in The Delineator five months after her death, and at the time of her death she was working on another novel.

Mary Hartwell Catherwood died of cancer December 26, 1902, in her Chicago home, the evening before her 25th wedding anniversary. Her husband and daughter were with her. She was 55 years old. She had achieved both financial independence and public recognition, yet her marriage had remained intact. She had a circle of literary friends apart from her husband who remained in the background of her professional life. Though she apparently loved her husband she retained her own identity and

did not become an extension of him; his ambitions were not her ambitions, nor were her ambitions his. Mary had to write. To stifle this creative talent or stuff it into a middle western, middle class stereotyped mold of a housewife would have been to kill the person. Mary was a housewife, yet she was not a housewife devoted to housecleaning or any other domestic duty necessary to that occupation. She was a woman who needed her family and their love, yet she could be independent and self-sufficient. Mary Hartwell Catherwood was herself, and her family and friends accepted her for herself. This was all she asked. This was all there was to this woman's role, or to this woman's place.

NOTES

[1] M. L. Wilson, Biography of Mary Hartwell Catherwood (Newark, Ohio: American Tribune Printery, 1904), p. 13.

[2] Robert Price, "Mrs. Catherwood's Early Experiments with Critical Realism," American Literature, 20 (May 1945), 148.

[3] Wilson, p. 23.

[4] Wilson gives the amount as being " . . . . a two dollar bill and a fifty cent fractional note." p. 21.

[5] Wilson, p. 17.

[6] Wilson, p. 67.

[7] Price, pp. 140-41.

[8] Lewtrahl, "The Monument of the First Mrs. Smith," Kokomo Weekly Dispatch, 7 November 1878, p. 1, cols. 3-4.
Mary Hartwell used the pseudonym Lewtrahl frequently during the early years of her career.

[9] Lewtrahl, "A Little God," Kokomo Weekly Dispatch, 19 December, 26 December 1878, 2 January, 9 January, 16 January 1879. (All citations noted appeared on p. 1, cols. 3-4).

[10] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," Lippincott's Magazine, 25 (June 1880), 706-13.

[11] Price, p. 141.

[12] Harpers Christmas. This was a special issue published by Harpers in 1882 and has no volume number.

[13] Wilson, p. 55.

CHAPTER III. THE RANGE OF HER WRITING

Mary Hartwell Catherwood was one of many women authors to gain recognition in the late 1880s. Catherwood achieved her greatest success through her novels of historical romance, but prior to her success with these novels, she had established her reputation as a versatile and accomplished writer. She was prolific and well-known in the genre of juvenile fiction. Many of her children's stories were included in anthologies. As a writer of poetry, Mary received her first monetary reward, but poetry was never the strongest of her talents. She did not limit herself to the creative aspect of writing, for she was employed many years as a drama critic and wrote several articles about traveling.

Fiction, however, was her forte, and in this genre she excelled, especially during the 1880s and 1890s. Early in her career, she wrote a few philosophical stories, one of which is called "The Tunnel," an intriguing story of a young girl's journey through life. She wrote stories that recorded accurately the unusual, and the special occasions, as well as the mundane occurrences, in the life of a small-town resident. She wrote of these events, and their natural setting, so realistically that she established her reputation as an artist of the "local color." And it is very possible that Mary Catherwood might have achieved great and lasting fame had she pursued the critically realistic style of her first stories for the Kokomo Weekly Dispatch. She, instead, followed her

great interest in history, and by researching and writing about the historical events of her interest, to which she added the frequently missing element of romance, she promoted the historical romantic novel for which she is best known.

Early in her career, her stories were not especially noteworthy, but when she started writing for the Kokomo Weekly Dispatch, her writing became more distinctive. After she married and her husband had assumed responsibility for her financial security, she wrote for the Dispatch without pay. Being under no financial obligation to the Dispatch, Mary felt more freedom to write critically of life as she saw it. She told her readers the grim and sometimes sordid details of life on the farm and in small villages. She described the harshness and hopelessness of life for the farm wife and the degraded drabness of life for the woman of the village. Her extensive use of criticism is seen in "The Monument of the First Mrs. Smith," and "The Little God," published in The Ladies Repository, and in "The Spirit of an Illinois Town," published in The Atlantic Monthly. Life was hard for the people of the farm and frontier, and that is what Catherwood told her readers. In "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," published in Lippincott's in June 1880, she describes the growth of a town and the toll it takes on the people who reside there. One young man from the east brings his bride and his sister to the prairie and starts farming enthusiastically:

> When the farmer first went upon the prairie he was a lily-faced student fresh from college, very glib in his Latin and Greek and fond of demonstrating to open-

> mouthed rustics an ingenious algebraic problem in which one from one left two.[1]
>
> Earlier comers in the houses dotted here and there began to notice the young farmer. They reported with scorn that he carried an umbrella and wore gloves when he ploughed. One prairie-breaker allowed him just a year to get out of there.[2]

But he and his family changed and endured:

> Monotonous years set their marks on the family. The medallion-like clearness of profile which the farmer brought to his work became blunted, and the enthusiasm of his gaze turned to shrewdness. His fingers formed a natural glove of horny tan. He construed living markets to the neglect of dead languages, and as the hard-earned coin rolled toward him he buried it in spreading acres. The greed of the soil possessed him, and he was actually proud of being 'land poor.' He looked forward to the time when civilization would run to meet him and his dollars burst their loamy coffer.[3]

In the end the farmer was as changed as the land. A town had grown around him and he took every advantage of it. He had tenants to farm his land, windmills to pump his water, and he had a larger career that took his attention. He had commercial enterprises now.

> And the house which should be the fitting exponent of his estate was to be built. As it rose from the levelled and cultivated spot on which sandhill cranes used to dance, who could blame the farmer if he congratulated himself on having so successfully obeyed the hackneyed injunction, "Go West, young man--go West and grow up with the country?"[4]

But, Catherwood subtly asks in her last statement, at what price have these changes been achieved? Her realistic description of farm and small town life and her incisive look at what progress was doing to the land and the people give the reader more than a story; they also give the reader something to think about.

Catherwood did not retain this element of criticism to any great degree. She turned instead to realism in nature and in history but without the bite of critical analysis. Her ability to describe nature is seen in "The Blue Man."

> The lake was like a meadow full of running streams. Far off indeed it seemed frozen with countless wind-paths traversing the ice, so level and motionless was the surface under a gray sky. But summer rioted in verdure over the cliffs to the very beaches. From the high greenery of the island could be heard the tink-tank of a bell where some cow sighed amid the delicious gloom.[5]

She maintains this ability to make nature come alive throughout her career by describing beauty or ugliness with unusual skill in realistic description and an excellent use of sensory detail that makes the setting of her story a living background for the events.

Her use of descriptive detail should reserve her a place in the history of literature. Her ability to transport her reader into the special events, or into the everyday routines of the 1880s and the 1890s is worth the study of any student interested in the customs of the era.

She earned a reputation as a writer of local color stories by her realistic description of settings, and most of her stories can be

classified regionally as her interest in an area changed. It is possible to divide her work into stories of the Middle West, Mississippi Valley, and French-Canada. The Middle-West division can be subdivided by states, and the French-Canada subdivided into French Canadian stories and stories about France.

When she started recounting history and historical events, however, she added romantic elements to her stories. Her interest and devotion to accurate detail were still apparent, but she embellished each story with a romantic touch that qualified the realism. In the last years of her writing she had turned from realism and left her readers with the historical romances. Her earlier brief emphasis on criticism was lost in sentiment. It was the historical romances, however, that thrust her into the realm of the popular writer and made her one of the best-selling authors of her time. She was among the first to give the American people this form of fiction, but her talents were by no means limited to this form.

Mary Catherwood had a love of poetry that began when she first started to write. Her first published work was a piece of poetry written when she was eleven and published in the school paper. Although she was not as well-known for her poetry as she was for her fiction, she continued to write and publish poetry throughout her literary career. One of her later poems, which is included in the Wilson biography, is "My Secret." An obituary notice by Edwin Scott quoted in Wilson's book states that the poem is one he considers of "special merit."

It is not generally known that Mrs. Catherwood, in addition to her other accomplishments was a poet. The vivifying power of her prose was due, almost wholly, to the infusion of poetic thought; so that it would have been astonishing if she had not written verses. In fact, she wrote many in her early life. One of special merit . . . .

My Secret

If you knew my secret, you would not believe it;
If you knew my secret, you would laugh at me.
Once I was a tree: how my life did leave it,
That I cannot tell at all. But once I was a tree.

Wide I spread my branches, with all the leaves a-shaking;
Oh, but it was mighty to wrestle with the storm!
Deep I struck my roots, and feared not any quaking;
There I hid my heart's best blood, to save and keep it warm.

Still I want to ripple, with the rythmic motion;
Still I strike my roots so deep they never can be moved;
Oh, I want to sing the song the angels taught the ocean.
And the ocean taught the forest, for the forest was beloved.

Give me room to grow in; let me shelter creatures;
Let the autumn strike me golden; let the winter strip,
I forget that flesh has given me human features.
Still the Dryad spirit is laughing on my lip;

For I was a tree, with hill-sides for my pillows;
I once was a tree, glad in the rushing rains,
Oh, I want to sing the songs that the angels taught the billows.
When I see my forest kin, the sap leaps through my veins.[6]

This poem was originally published in Poets and Poetry of Indiana in 1900.

Mary Catherwood also received recognition for writing children's stories--at one time, in 1876, she published six children's stories, one serialized children's story, one juvenile poem and two adult short stories. Her publication credits in the genre of children's fiction alone are an enviable accomplishment. There were very few years of her literary life that she did not write and publish at least one juvenile story, and most years she published several.

Mary Catherwood's work was not limited to fiction or poetry, however. Her versatility permitted her to write and publish numerous articles, feature stories, and dramatic reviews. She was employed for a time as a drama critic, and she wrote as a free-lance reviewer for several years. Her article about French roads was reprinted by many magazines and her papers and notes describing her research in France for The Days of Jeanne d'Arc were the source of numerous articles. According to one biographer, Robert Price, it is believed that many of her articles and stories have been lost or are not identifiable because they were unsigned. She also contributed many articles and stories to several publications under the pseudonym "Lewtrahl."

Mary Catherwood was able to write in almost every literary genre. She even wrote one play, Dollard: A Play in Four Acts and an Epilogue.[7]

The quantity and diversity of her writing are remarkable for someone who had such a short life. When studying the quality of her writing, her versatility, and her outstanding record of publications, one cannot but wonder why literary history has neglected both the author and her work.

NOTES

[1] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The Career of a Dairy Farmer," Lippincott's Magazine, 25 (June 1880), 706.

[2] "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," p. 707.

[3] "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," p. 709.

[4] "The Career of a Prairie Farmer," p. 713.

[5] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The Blue Man," Mackinac and Lake Stories (1899; rept. New York: First Garrett Press Ed., 1969), p. 187.

[6] M. L. Wilson, Biography of Mary Hartwell Catherwood (Newark, Ohio: American Tribune Printery, 1904), p. 13.

[7] Robert Price, "A Critical Biography of Mrs. Mary Hartwell Catherwood," Diss. Ohio State University 1943, p. 445.

CHAPTER IV. PORTRAITS OF WOMEN IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Mary Hartwell Catherwood reflected in her novels and short stories the freedom women were trying to achieve in the 1880s and 1890s. The women's movement that began in 1848, the year after Mary was born, was primarily directed toward women's suffrage and abolition, but it brought to light many other ways in which women were disenfranchised.

During Mary's growing years, between the 1850s and 1870s, many changes were noted. The Blacks had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation and the war; the women's movement regained momentum after the Civil War had temporarily redirected the energetic women of the cause; and some middle class, as well as upper class women, were being accepted into institutions of higher learning. Women were slowly beginning to rebel against the constricting "lace corset" clothing of Victorian fashion, and the equally restricting Victorian moral code imposed by nineteenth century American society. While women were looking for more comfortable and freer clothing, they were also looking for more freedom in intellectual and physical activity.

As cities and towns grew, the changing economy helped create a middle class in which women had less need to contribute to the family coffers. At the same time a few young, single, college educated women were trying to enter medicine, law, and many other professional fields that had been closed to them. With the lessened demand for their

physical labor, some women were becoming concerned about their lack of civil rights. This concern did not create a grand march to follow the banner of women's rights, but nonetheless a significant number of women were responding to the call of the movement. These changes all had an effect on Mary as she started to write. It would not be fair to say that she was a staunch, flag-waving feminist, or even that she was strongly identified with the cause, but her own way of life and the way she portrays women in many of her short stories and novels leave no doubt that she was aware of some of the problems and injustices that were troubling women at that time. She demonstrated support for the fledgling women's organization by redefining in her writing the societal concept of "women's role." The role dictated by society was not comfortable for her. Looking at the characters in her stories the reader can get a sense of her regard for "woman's role," or "woman's place."

Because her own life had not conformed to that of most women of her era, Mary Hartwell Catherwood felt a freedom to write of three different roles for women. She seldom wrote of the upper class woman's role that prevailed in the cities. This was the housewife who had little to do; her husband regarded her as a helpmate only in that she kept his house, made his life more comfortable, and kept the servants busy. She had little purpose in life except to bear children and be ornamental. She was her husband's "pet." Of the other two types about which Catherwood wrote, one was that of the stereotypical housewife, the woman who did all the work around the house and frequently helped outside too. This woman

received little reward or thanks for her work and sacrifices, and usually lacked energy for anything beyond the constant demands of her household. Her work was seemingly endless. She woke early and worked from the time her feet touched the floor until she finally laid her exhausted body on a bed at night. This was the expected role of the housewife. She was to work as much as possible, play as little as possible, and at all times put the interests of her husband first. This woman was the household drudge. In Catherwood's work, these women lacked color and vitality, and were always subservient to men.

The other role in which she cast women was one she knew intimately. This woman was usually a pretty, free-spirited female who actively helped men achieve their goals, or worked to achieve her own goals. She was not a backdrop for her husband's success, nor was she satisfied to remain in his reflected glory. She and her husband shared success or failure. She was not without love nor the need for love, for she usually married and felt a deep commitment to, and love for, her husband and family. But she was her own self, too. This woman had her own interests that were not necessarily those her family or her husband might want for her. This woman was strong in spirit, strong in will, and frequently had her own way in spite of the man who tried to influence her. Not infrequently she influenced a man by subtly underplaying her own strength and intelligence or by simply favoring the man who had a more gentle manner. In most of her stories, Catherwood shows that an intelligent, thoughtful and gentle nature in a man did not detract from his strength or his manhood. She used

this characteristic of gentleness instead to demonstrate a man's strength and to show there could be a different way for a man to be successful; an easier, less violent, more compassionate way of accomplishing things; a man could be both strong, and gentle. These traits were present in most men but not always easily seen. It usually took a tragedy or the love of an understanding woman to bring them out. Of course, in some men, a gentle, thoughtful side could never be seen.

In one of her early stories, Catherwood wrote of such a man. In "The Monument of the First Mrs. Smith, a True Story of To-day," she explains to her readers, especially to the women, that a monument stands, an imposing brick monument, to the first Mrs. Smith. For Susan, laying up the brick and mortar for her monument would have been easier than the backbreaking labor she engaged in. Her life was hard; her husband, her master, was deeply in debt when he married, and Susan had to do without many things so that the farm could be paid off. But she willingly worked long, weary hours, day in and day out with no rest, and no help; she sacrificed much, scrimping and pinching pennies to pay the mortgage and secure a debt-free future for her husband. "She laid her life on the altar of his fortunes--her fresh girlish life--and saw it shrivel year by year until it was consumed and fell away in ashes."[1] Catherwood uses satire in this short story to emphasize the drudgeries and difficulties that are inherent in life on the farm. The life of a farm wife is one of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and little reward. Mr. Smith had three men to help him with his work, but he never thought to

hire help for his wife. She carried the water because there was no cistern or well; she dug vegetables stored in the ground for winter because there was no cellar; she had the babies, and when half of them died because they were too weak to survive, she contented herself with the knowledge that she had had them for a little while. She did all this and more and remained silently patient, waiting for her house to be built. But when the house was built, Mrs. Smith, old long before her time, died. She had no stamina, her husband complained.

Now there is a new Mrs. Smith. A young, gay, vivacious Mrs. Smith who has servants, pretty dresses, an adoring husband and a beautiful brick house. But does the second wife ever hear a sigh breathe through the rooms? or see the red line in the mortar of the brick like a woman's life blood cemented them? No, for she is not the morbid sort.

> No, she never does! She isn't such a morbid fancier! Susan's monument is her house, thank you, ma'am! Doesn't make any difference who built the house--it's her's /sic/ now, and she's having a good time in it, and has a perfect right so to do!
>
> It's an every-day affair. And a matter of astonishment, too, how many women there are who embrace the fate of Susan.
>
> MORAL:--Girls, if you must marry Mr. Smith, don't take him on the first ballot--i.e.: wait till the monument is built, and then enter as the second Mrs. Smith.[2]

Catherwood shows three life styles for women and makes her readers clearly aware of the one she approves, but she expresses pity for the

existence of women who choose to become a slave to the men they love. Catherwood uses satire very well in this story to make a point about conditions in which most farm wives find themselves. There is no hint of the romantic element that was to become characteristic of her later stories. In this story the man is selfish and self-centered; his wife is self-sacrificing and martyred to his dream. This position Mary Hartwell would not like for herself. She would not accept the life of drudgery and sacrifice she describes. This short story is a warning that other women should be careful and not accept it either. Catherwood wanted and needed freedom from the demanding chores of the housewife of the 1880s, and when she married she was able to retain her freedom to a greater extent than were most women of that time. She was not against marriage. In fact, she favored it, but she saw no reason for the bonds of marriage to create bondage for women. She believed that mutual respect was necessary. Each partner should accept the other as an equal individual and partner, neither should be the master or the slave.

The opposite to Mrs. Smith can be found in 'Tite Laboise in the story "Black Feather," written and published in 1899.[3] In "Black Feather" the rough voyageur Charle' Charette, who wins the heart of 'Tite Laboise, the prettiest, most high spirited girl in town, cannot understand his bride's cool attitude toward him when he returns from a half-year trapping expedition. By her actions 'Tite Laboise changes her husband's rough nature to one that is more considerate of others, especially of herself. She accomplishes this by making him very jealous.

After the men are back from an absence of several months, Charette does not go straight to his wife but drinks with his friends for a while. To 'Tite Laboise this is unacceptable behavior, so she dances with other men and will have nothing to do with her husband. He is outraged at first, but this emotion yields to confusion and eventually to capitulation. 'Tite Laboise wants all the attention of her husband, and she doesn't want to share him with his friends. To show his love, and assure her of his desire to keep her happy, Charette gives her his cherished black feather which symbolizes his important status as a hunter and trapper; it means he is the best hunter in the area and he wears it with great pride. Now she is happy and assured that she is more important to him than anything or anyone else. 'Tite Laboise has behaved in many ways like a child, an intelligent, independent, manipulative, yet beloved child. Her behavior is calculated to get her what she wants. Catherwood is showing the reader that even a strong, husky, quick-witted man is no match for a high-spirited, equally quick-witted girl. This woman will be no slave to her husband. She will rule him. Catherwood reveals her belief that the independent woman is more apt to get what she wants and the respect she desires than the subservient woman.

In another short story, "The News that Came to Asher's,"[4] she shows two different farmsteads and two different wife styles--the wife and farm of Job Asher, and the wife and farm of farmer Pettibone. Job Asher is a stingy, penny-pinching, land-poor farmer while Pettibone has made his home comfortable, bought stocks in a bank, and become inportant in the

community. Catherwood uses Mrs. Asher to show the difficult life of the farm wife. She is the epitome of the drudge. In the first paragraph she is seen as she cleans away the remains of a huge meal she has prepared for thirteen threshers. The men are resting in the barn or on the porch, catching a breeze, unwilling to return to the field before two o'clock because of the heat.

> They had eaten a huge dinner, and there was only one woman to wait on them all. She was not standing in the cool creek along with the happier cattle, at that time of day, I warrant you, nor resting herself in such air as might be stirring, after the morning's labor of cooking for her army. While the men lounged and Job Asher fretted, his sallow, sad wife went stooping around her kitchen, washing the dishes, and preparing things for supper. Really it seemed that her vitality must be exhausted at the next step, but she knew she should keep on walking and working like a machine until all which was required of her was finished. She had long survived that period when she could find any pleasure in accomplishing tasks or the thrift to which her husband exhorted her. Poor Mrs. Asher was a broken spring--a stretched out bit of elastic.[5]

This story and the short story about the monument to Mrs. Smith describe in detail the hardships of the housewife who is a drudge. In both stories, Catherwood's reader can find little merit in this kind of life. The drudge, the doormat, the slave, are not characters she admires, and women who choose these roles or who are cast in them are to be pitied. These are the only stories in which Catherwood uses this type of woman as the most important character. Elsewhere, she turns to another kind of woman. The woman with spirit and independence, who refuses to accept the

position of drudge, who stands for individuality, who seeks to improve herself if she can, this is the woman to admire.

In "Lilith," Catherwood shows this character.[6] Lilith has more spirit and independence than her cousin Pamela finds comfortable. She has lived a full but, in Pamela's eyes, a sinful life. She has a power that invades the house when she visits. Pamela, who lives with her father and a male boarder, is quiet and unassuming. She is the youthful version of the housewife without being a wife. She has enough spirit to escape being completely entangled in the web of domesticity if she should choose to do so, but she keeps house for her father, cooks for their boarder and her cousin, Lilith, and does the quiet domestic chores of a housewife. She is not denied company as a farm wife might be, but she has few friends in the small village where she lives because social intercourse is not encouraged with a man who has failed in business as her father has done. Lilith frightens Pamela a little because of her impetuosity, for Lilith does not feel the same constraints that inhibit Pamela. Pamela is a handsome, shy, lackluster girl while Lilith is an ever-changing, beautifully colorful woman to whom attention is drawn immediately. Lilith feels free to do things that shock Pamela, and Pamela is at times repelled by her tiger-like cousin. Lilith leaves her cousin's house and travels through Europe until her money runs out. At the end, her love story is just beginning when she returns to Albany and is reunited with the man she loves who has been trying to find her so they can marry. Her life and love are exciting and dramatic. Pamela's love story is just

beginning too. She has fallen in love with the boarder and her life will "develop into Eden-like simplicity and comfort."[7]

Catherwood makes the point that women do not have to give up excitement for love and marriage. They can be independent and married. This is a primary point Catherwood wants her reader to understand. When she makes this point, she is helping promote individuality for all women and freedom from the shackles that restrain the confined or uninspired housewife.

Although Pamela is not the housewife-slave of earlier stories, she is not far removed from this status. It is clear that Catherwood wants her reader to see the romance and glamor that follow Lilith who is the freer of the two women. Lilith loves and loves deeply but she is not a slave to the one she loves; she will retain most of her independence.

Most of Catherwood's short stories were published in magazines found in homes of educated upper and middle class women. These women were beginning to see a need for change in women's status in society. They were housewives, but not like those Catherwood had portrayed; yet, they were not free-spirited individualists either. Whether or not she is trying to let her reader imagine a life that could be different and better than the accepted role of housewife is speculation.

Whatever her motive, she has realistically recreated the rigors of frontier and farm circumstances. She has also shown women a different life style, a more independent one, but a life style that could be theirs if they chose. It is possible that she was describing a new concept of

the housewife, one that combined the duties of the housewife-slave but allowed her some independence and freedom that the free spirited heroine was permitted. While her female characters deal with problems of women, her stories reflect more than those problems; they also show relationships between men and women.

As Catherwood progresses and improves her craft, her characters change and become more daring. In The Romance of Dollard,[8] a story set in 1660, Clair Laval is not only independent and free spirited, but she follows her husband to a battlefield, bearing all kinds of hardships to eventually stand at his side while he is fighting the enemy. They are equal partners in marriage. Clair Laval and her foster sister, Louise, came to Canada from France, Clair to enter a convent, Louise to be part of the "marriage market." The ship brought one hundred and fifty women from France to be brides for the trappers, hunters, and farmers who had come earlier to settle in Canada. Louise finds a husband, marries, and settles into quiet domesticity. She is the housewife of Catherwood's novel. The difference between the housewife in this book and those of her earlier stories is that this one has evolved into a woman who is less a slave and more an individual person. Louise's husband cares for her and even though life is not easy, she is not a lonesome woman or a drudge. Louise and her husband settle into a small but comfortable cottage in a fairly large village unlike the rough, barely finished house in a small village or on a farm that Catherwood described as the domicile for the ill-favored housewife in her earlier stories. Louise has

all the traits of Catherwood's other housewives; she cooks, sews, tends the sick, and completes her other duties without complaint, but she is not downtrodden nor is her life lacking in hope. Louise is honored and treated well by her husband and friends. She and her husband share their lives, but they do not give up their differences to feed the ego of the other. The story does not revolve around Louise, the housewife, however; she is a minor figure. The independent Clair Laval is the heroine.

The shift to the romantic heroine seen in "Lilith" is carried out in this book. Clair Laval is young, pretty, and rich. She wants to enter a convent to take time to think and to devote her life to mission work. However, she meets a man she knew and admired in France and marries him. Dollard is a soldier who, after he is married, returns to his men in the war against the English that is being fought in Canada. Clair cannot stand this separation, so she makes her way to Dollard's side, where she stands next to him while he fights the Indians and the English until both Dollards are killed.

Catherwood was criticized for taking an exciting true story and adding an element that was not needed.[9] In fact, the critic says that even though her intentions are good, she fails to make the story as entertaining or as inspiring as the real event. The story of the voluntary sacrifice of seventeen men led by Adam Dollard to save French outposts from the Iroquois is inspiring in its simple and direct truth according to the critic. The added element of a romance detracts from Dollard's

character because he would never have endangered his wife's life, if he had a wife, by permitting her to sit on his knee during a battle.

Whatever the critics may say, Catherwood has portrayed a remarkably independent, spirited, and willful heroine. Her audacious action that appears reckless and foolish to us today would have been exciting and noble to the reader of the 1880s. Women in the 1880s were allowed more freedom than Mary Hartwell Catherwood had when she was growing, but for a woman to make such a journey with only another young girl for a guide would be unheard of and quite unthinkable. The devotion that Catherwood describes is much different than that of the devoted housewife-slave. Clair Laval is a woman of action.

While the reviewer finds the story a poor imitation of reality, another critic compliments Catherwood on her "portraiture" of Clair Laval as "the work of a poet rather than a novelist."

> The heroine, Clair Laval is a woman of the French noblesse . . . . The reader feels from the outset the sweet passion of the heroine's nature, but the revelation of her strength of will and intensity of purpose is gradually made . . . .[10]

Catherwood has portrayed in this story two different women with different yet equal strengths. This critic comments that Catherwood has a power to conceive human life and remain true to the inner facts of the event, yet makes it "real to us when it is clothed by the imagination with its fitting exterior."[11] Although the portrait of these women may be controversial, with The Romance of Dollard, Catherwood established her reputation as a writer of historical romance.

As she did with The Romance of Dollard, Catherwood uses another historical incident as a basis for The Lady of Fort St. John.[12] This story is about a quarrel between two men that leads to a battle in the French-Canadian and English war. However, most of the characters are women who are characterized as strong; some are strong-willed leaders, and some determined followers. The Lady of the Fort, Marie LaTour, is the epitome of the strong independent women shown in Catherwood's work. This woman and Jeanne d'Arc in The Days of Jeanne d'Arc[13] are heroines in battle, and their stories are based on real historical women and the events that made them heroines. Jeanne d'Arc is a well-known personage. Marie LaTour does not share this fame, yet she is no less courageous. Marie attempted to take the place of her husband as commander of the fort while he was trying to attract help for an expected attack. He did not return in time to save it from siege and destruction. His wife, as commander of the fort while it was under siege, lost her life beside the men she led.

Marie LaTour and Jeanne d'Arc are not typical of the free-spirited independent women Catherwood has written about. They are much stronger and have been in positions that required them to be courageous and brave to an extraordinary degree. It is worth noting that Catherwood chose to write of two women who were known as leaders of men instead of writing about women who achieved fame and renown in positions more typically confined to women. Florence Nightingale, Marie Antoinette, or Martha Washington were not subjects for Mary Catherwood's pen. The roles these

women played in history were the roles in which women had been cast for centuries: the attendant of the sick, the paramour, or the housewife. These women, although heroic and strong in their own right, were not people Catherwood would choose to write about. The self-sacrificing woman who devoted her life to others without seeking any reward or the woman devoted to her husband's success no matter the cost to herself was not one that interested Mary Catherwood. Through the way she lived her own life and the manner in which she portrays women in her writing, it appears that she thought women could be as courageous, brave, and enterprising as men; that women need not be confined by the idea prevalent in the nineteenth century that woman's place was in the home or in some occupation limited to serving men or children. Women should be able to have adventure and action.

Catherwood again shows two different roles for women in The White Islander.[14] In the story, the adventurous free-spirit of the young woman is restricted by her surroundings, but she remains quite independent. Marie Paul has been adopted by a Chippewa Indian chief who wants to marry her when the wars end. She has been living on an island with his grandmother and an adopted English boy who is a one-eyed half-wit. Marie takes care of the boy and at times helps the grandmother, an Indian equivalent of the housewife-slave, an accepted role for women in most Indian cultures. Although it was accepted that the women were slaves, at least Catherwood shows them as being aware that their status could be different. During a discussion between Marie and Noko, the grandmother, Noko assures Marie that all men are alike.

> "Noko, what is your opinion of men?"
>
> "They are all the same, on island or mainland, my child. When you are beautiful they kill one another for you; when you are ugly they sneer at you. Two chiefs once fought over me." The squaw laid her arms on her knees and laughed in them at the recollection.
>
> "But white men--they are not like red men."
>
> "Yes; all the same. Men are men. The more they come soft, humble, creeping the ground like the panther, the more they will eat you up and laugh at you."
>
> "Then, Noko, why did the good God make women to believe in them?"
>
> "I should like to ask the priest about it; but there are some things I cannot ask him, no matter how they perplex me. We ought to be old first, Noko, and when we have wisdom enough, grow young."
>
> "Wouldn't do," said the grandmother rising to stir the pot. "Never would marry any man at all, then."[15]

Catherwood is not criticizing men, but she is commenting on the status of women in society. Women's lot is such that if they had the wisdom of an aged person when they were young, in all likelihood they would not marry.

In this story, Catherwood does not have either of the two women representing one role or the other distinctly. In Marie she blends some of the housewife traits with the carefree and independent spirit of the heroines she has depicted in more recent stories. Marie accomplishes the necessary household tasks but retains the adventurous spirit that

is typical of many of Catherwood's heroines. Toward the end of the story, the Chippewas who are led by Alexander Henry's blood brother, the Indian chief who is the captor and jealous suitor of Marie, burn Henry at the stake. Marie jumps into the fire surrounding him, intending to die with the man she loves. Because Marie has the qualities of both types of women, Catherwood appears to have tempered her views when defining the roles of women. At least she has come to realize that it is possible for the two roles to be compatible in some women.

Catherwood is changing her picture of women slightly. Instead of a housewife-drudge who has no freedom or hope, the character now has both. The independent woman is seen as one who is not completely independent and free, but who needs love and is aware that household tasks need to be done and she willingly does them.

Not all of Catherwood's housewife-drudge characters are older, married women. One is young and unmarried. Jenieve Lalotte in "Pontiac's Lookout" is a young woman who tries to keep her independent, untamed mother in hand.[16] Her mother is a carefree, spirited woman who has married twice and now wants to marry again. Jenieve, however, is determined that she will not marry a third time, but will assume what Jenieve considers her responsibilities, the care of her two young sons, half-breed, half-brothers to Jenieve.

Jenieve disapproved of her mother's second marriage to an Indian and when he died she felt no grief. Instead, she took over the tasks of keeping house for her mother and taking care of the young boys. Jenieve

had been raised by her French grandmother, and when the grandmother died, she brought her widowed mother and her half-brothers to live at the farmhouse with her. Jenieve keeps the house clean, feeds the family, and keeps the boys bathed and disciplined as well as she can.

Jenieve is one of the finest spinners of wool in the territory, and she earns money by selling her work for a small profit. She provides food and clothing for the family and does her best to keep her mother from behaving "improperly." Her mother is a gregarious, fun-loving woman who does not like the restrictions her daughter places on her activities. She takes her daughter's attempts to keep her in line with good humor, but these restrictive actions become a trial to her and her young sons.

Mary Catherwood has reversed the traditional roles in this story, and the mother and daughter have essentially changed places.

> "Mama,"--she spoke tremulously--"I was obliged to bring you in. It is not proper to be seen on the street with an engagé. The town is full of these bushlopers."
>
> "Jenieve Lalotte," spoke the neighbor, "before you finish whipping your mother you had better run and whip the boys. They are throwing their shoes in the lake."[17]

As hard as she tries, Jenieve Lalotte cannot keep her mother from marrying again. The woman takes her sons and runs off with a man she loves at that moment.

The mother earns the sympathy of the reader because she is so restrained by her upstanding but not understanding daughter. Catherwood makes the reader see the injustice of anyone trying to mold another to her own pattern of living or trying to impose her own moral and social code on someone else. Jenieve's mother is happy being herself, but Jenieve can't see that. Catherwood's point is made with a gentle needle, but the prick made in the conscience of society is meant to draw at least a drop of blood. Women may be independent and spirited whatever their age, or they may be restrained and governed by the strict social code of a small town society. It is the woman's choice. Catherwood doesn't let the reader forget that the rewards for independence are gratifying but at times the price may be high. Neither does she let the reader forget that women, if they think about their position at all, should realize the choice is theirs.

Women have a choice between being submissive or independent whether they are single or married. They have the choice between the household-drudge or the free-spirited, independent woman. If the woman is single, her choice affects only herself. In marriage, however, what she chooses to be directly affects her husband. Catherwood did not disapprove of marriage but indicates that husbands and wives should be equal partners in their relationship. The wife's role should not be that of a servant to her husband as the housewife-drudge is, nor should it be one of a ruler, as a domineering, independent wife might want to be. By the same token, a husband should not expect his wife to do without any necessary

help or convenience that he would not deny himself; he should not be a dictator in his house. Neither should he be submissive to his wife all the time. Catherwood expected each to respect the other and not try to change the other.

Catherwood has written of the household-drudge and the free-spirited heroine but in "Stephen Guthrie" published in Lippincott's in 1882, she reflects on one more role that society has dictated for some women.[18] The role of the ornament or "pet" is as reprehensible to Catherwood as that of the housewife-drudge. It is the one usually thrust upon women who are related to or married to well-to-do men. This position is probably the most devastating and degrading that society presses upon a human. In "Stephen Guthrie," when a middle-aged matron talks about Naomi Sands because she is teaching school and has not married, she says:

> "She can't teach forever," resumed Mrs. Camperman. "If I was in her place, I'd get out of it as quick as I could. What lives teachers must lead. Such hard work, and so little for it. I'd rather go into somebody's kitchen than teach school, though a hot August day would finish me there." Ripples of laughter chased each other over her face. "Good thing I never had any occasion to exert myself: I always felt myself cut out for a pet."[19]

In this story, Rodney Batelle, a sister to the wealthy Ambrose Batelle, is the personification of the irresponsible "pet" who thinks of no one but herself. Catherwood portrays her as myopically convinced that the world revolves around her, a woman to be pitied as much as the

housewife-slave. The woman could be different; her circumstances would permit her that, but her vanity will not. Because she chooses this role she is, to Catherwood, beneath contempt.

Such women were encouraged to marry and become ornaments, doing little except entertain and keep their servants busy. The man of the house also expected modest behavior from the women he kept. When his fiancée, Naomi, walked around the ferry alone, Ambrose Batelle admonished her.

> "I didn't like to have you running around over the boat alone. People are noticing."
>
> "Let them notice. I don't have to cut short my walks to suit them."
>
> "You don't want any remarks made. I shouldn't like it."[20]

Naomi Batelle in "Stephen Guthrie" is the antithesis of her husband's sister, Rodney Batelle. Naomi falls in love with Stephen Guthrie, whom she had met only through letters. When he fails to meet her at an assigned time and she instead meets his niece who is also named Stephen Guthrie, she feels betrayed and marries a rich man she does not love, Ambrose Batelle.

Naomi was not well-to-do but had worked hard for the money she earned to care for herself. Because she had been raised in a family that knew little social etiquette, she was at a disadvantage when she married the well-to-do Ambrose Batelle. His sister, who lived with them, lost no opportunity to make her aware of her lack of knowledge of accepted

social graces. Although she was strong-willed, her strength and will were nearly destroyed by the superior attitude of the sister and the manner in which she worked to undermine her self-confidence.

When her husband loses his money and his health, he also loses his friends and his family who had placed him in a position of veneration when he had money and power. Now, however, they look down on him and desert him. Naomi remains loyal, not out of love, but out of her own humanity and moral convictions, something his family and friends lack. Naomi mocks and rages at a hypocritical society that encourages friendship and social intercourse when a man is successful, but feels free to deny the friendship when the man fails. Naomi is the strength for her husband, working to earn money to pay their own bills and to help support his sisters who will not work. When his health fails completely and he dies, it is to the apparent regret of no one except Naomi.

"Stephen Guthrie" is the only story in which Catherwood shows her reader an extensive view of this type of woman. Rodney Batelle, the "pet," is a villain, Naomi Batelle, the independent, loyal, and frequently outspoken heroine is more admirable to the reader than the singleminded Rodney who cares not one whit about other people. The thinking woman triumphs over the ornamental woman. Rodney Batelle is one example of the role of woman as a "pet" or ornament and it is not a role that Catherwood considers after this story.

Even though many of her female characters were free-spirited and independent, in her love stories, Catherwood could not completely break

with her Victorian background. Sexuality is almost nonexistent in her stories. The Victorian moral code that denied women sexuality still held most women in its restrictive grip. Sexual feelings and desires were tolerated in men, but if a woman of the Victorian age felt love, it was to be on a level that would uplift the more base desires of men. The feelings men and women shared should be a noble love. What Catherwood's sexual attitudes were in her own life is not known, but most of her readers would have difficulty accepting any more sexuality in her women characters than the limited amount she allowed them. In one of her earliest novels, Craque O Doom,[21] published in 1881, the man, a dwarf, marries a very young girl with the intention of providing for her education and allowing her an escape from the miserable existence she had in the town of Barnet. Tamsin is from the poor section of town and has no hope for education or escape until Craque O Doom marries her. The noble gentleman does not tell Tamsin he loves her but becomes a father figure remaining in the background. Tamsin is sent away to school and Craque O Doom is involved with his work. At the end of the story, Tamsin admits to her husband that she married him because she cares for him, but the words "I love you" are never exchanged. The couple finally live together and the last words in the book are a telegram that suggests a child has been born to them. This is the only hint of sexuality in the book.

Catherwood almost overcomes her reticence to allow her female characters any sexuality in "The King of Beaver," written in 1898 and published in Harper's Monthly in 1898.[22] In this story the head of the

Mormon congregation on Beaver Island, who already has eight wives, finds a young woman he desires to have as his ninth. Emeline has come to the island to live with relatives and to forget a young man she loves but with whom she has had a serious quarrel. Emeline is attracted to the leader, but she resists this attraction and tries to overcome her feelings. The King of Beaver, as the leader is called, pursues Emeline, confident that she will be unable to resist him. Emeline does resist him, but he insists that she will eventually realize the desire she feels.

> "My child, you touch me as no one has touched me yet. There is scarcely need of words between us. I know what I am to you. You shall not stay on the island if you do not wish it. Oh, you are going to make me do my best!"
>
> The King of Beaver laughed aloud. With continued gentleness he explained to her: "You will come to me. Gentile brutes may chase women like savages and maltreat them afterwards; but it is different with you and me."[23]

Later when she has ventured through the woods and close to town, he surprises her when he comes up behind her and speaks.

> "Have I been a patient man?" he inquired, standing between her and her uncle's house. "I waited for you to come to me."
>
> "I am obliged to go somewhere," said Emeline, plucking the leaves and unsteadily shifting her eyes about his feet. "I cannot stay on the farm all the time." Through numbness she felt the pricking of a sharp rapture.
>
> The King of Beaver smiled, seeing betrayed in her face the very vertigo of joy.

> "You will give yourself to me now?" he winningly begged, venturing out-stretched hands. "You have felt the need as I have? Do you think the days have been easy to me? When you were on your knees I was on my knees too. Every day you came in this direction. I came as far as I dared to meet you. Are the obstacles all passed?"
>
> "No," said Emeline.
>
> He was making her ask herself that most insidious question. "Why could not the other have been like this?"[24]

Emeline's resistance is almost broken when the King of the Beaver serenades her with his violin. She is weakening when Mary French, wife number eight, tells her that the lover with whom she had quarreled is on the island looking for her. Mary French then helps Emeline escape to him.

The moral restrictions of the Victorian era were too difficult for Catherwood to completely cast aside, but she acknowledged the sexual desires of men. She did not expect women to have strong desires of this nature, or at least she was not ready to write of them. In this one area of moral conduct, Catherwood could not permit even her free-spirited heroine a choice that would break the rules of social conduct so drastically. She and her characters were locked into sexual behavior patterns that could not be broken easily.

As her work progressed and her own life changed, Catherwood altered her women characters somewhat. She continued to write of two different roles for women, but the housewife-drudge is greatly modified in her later work and the free-spirited, independent woman is not quite so

rebellious, and she does not write much of the "pet." Perhaps her popularity causes her to temper her views in deference to her widening audience, or perhaps as the women's movement gained followers, she relaxed her strong interpretation of the differences in women's roles so that her independent characters would appear within the reach of more women, or perhaps her views of the role of women changed as she grew more mature. Of the three speculations, the second seems the most in character with Mary Catherwood. She maintained her own independence carefully even after she married and had a child.

One of Catherwood's early stories, "The Tunnel,"[25] written in 1876 and published in The Ladies Repository, is one of her most unusual. She seldom wrote philosophically, but this entire story is written in such a vein. In many ways it is prophetic of her life, the women's movement, and the abolition movement.

This is the story of a confused young girl who does not know what she wants from life. She encounters an old woman who mocks her, asking if she would like to be a sponge that has just enough life to move back and forth with the rolling water. The girl assures her that she does not want that but neither does she want to continually struggle under circumstances she cannot overcome. The woman tells her that this story is one she has heard hundreds of times. She leads the girl to a tunnel and explains that if the girl will weave herself a web from the material in the cave, she will find a glorious and pleasant land where she will be royally received on the other side. The tunnel, however, is dangerous

and the girl is cautioned before she enters that more fail than succeed. But she enters the tunnel and starts to weave.

Her first setback is a steep slope that causes her to slide into a deep waterhole. As she struggles out of the water, she hears a voice say:

> "Of what use was it for you to venture in here?" breathed a voice in the tunnel. "Was not life wretched enough, without your making it absolutely insupportable? Why weren't you content to sit under the blackberry bushes? What better could have been expected of you?"

The voice asks why she dares to dream, why she must do things differently.

> "Why was I not born to better fortune?" breathed the girl, in reply. "One question is as absurd as the other just now. I do not know why any thing is; not even why I dared to come into the dark. But something made me dare; I had to dare. There was so much hope of pleasant land beyond the tunnel! And now that I am in the tunnel I must go on, or die like a worm in the deeps of the earth."[26]

As the girl continues to weave, the fabric that encircles her becomes stronger and some of her problems become greater. She meets obstacle after obstacle while the voice reminds her that others have not tried this difficult way, they have used themselves up and they appear to be happy. She is happy that these others are content with what they are doing, but she can't be happy with what they have; she has to have more.

When at last she comes to the end of the tunnel, she sees the pleasant land, her dress woven with her own hands has changed into the robe of a queen, and she is greeted royally.

> This is the story of a tiger-lily, which went through the tunnel of germination before it unfolded its glories to the sun. It is the story of the black race, in its march toward higher civilization.
>
> It is the completed story of thousands who are yet in tunnels. The story of a soul.[27]

This story is not only a story of the black race and their trouble in attaining their freedom, it is also the story of the women's movement, its struggles, disappointments and setbacks that occurred while the organization was growing and gaining experience. It is also the story of Mary Hartwell Catherwood and her perception of different roles for women in a changing society. It is a story of hope for all people who struggle against the mores of a stagnant, unbending society to try to change the status quo or, at least, rise above it. It was Mary Catherwood's declaration that she would live her life as she had to live it.

History has not treated Catherwood well. Her historical romances and her contributions to popular fiction have not received their due credit, for they paved a path that many women and some men novelists have since followed. She carefully studied her background material and thoroughly researched her stories giving her readers an accurate account of the historical events she described, usually fictionalizing only the romance in the story. The historical romantic story appealed to women. Because of this appeal, her probable influence on women and the roles they played in their own social groups must be acknowledged.

Mary Hartwell Catherwood saw women cast in roles, the "pet," the housewife-drudge, or the independent, free-spirited, intelligent female who needed more than the duties of a household, to keep her happy. Her portrayal of these roles in her early writing could leave little doubt in the minds of her readers which of the roles she felt women should emulate. Women were not to be the housewife-slave, forgotten in the kitchen; they were not to be the ornament that was displayed at parties; they were to be equal with men, partners in marriage. It was not her intent to show women as superior to men nor were they in any way to move into the male domain or role. Men and women had socially and biologically defined roles that were different but were equally important. One was not superior to the other. Men and women were partners, the role of each complementing the other. Mary Catherwood's writing may have unknowingly accomplished a great deal toward helping women see themselves and their roles in society differently.

NOTES

[1] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The Monument of the First Mrs. Smith, a True Story of To-Day," Kokomo Weekly Dispatch, 7 November 1878, p. 1.

[2] "The Monument of Mrs. Smith," p. 1.

[3] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "Black Feather," Mackinac and Lake Stories, (1889; rpt. New York: Garrett Press, 1969), pp. 20-34.

[4] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The News that Came to Asher's," The Ladies Repository, 36 (August 1876), 120-26.

[5] "The News that Came to Asher's," p. 120.

[6] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "Lilith," Lippincott's Magazine, 27 (January-March 1881), 28-42, 130-43, 238-51.

[7] "Lilith," p. 250.

[8] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, The Romance of Dollard (New York: The Century Co., 1888).

[9] Review of The Romance of Dollard, The Nation, 50 (13 March 1890), 226.

[10] Review of The Romance of Dollard, The Atlantic Monthly, 65 (January 1890), 125-26.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, The Lady of Fort St. John (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1891).

[13] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, The Days of Jeanne d'Arc (London: Gay and Bird, 1898).

[14] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, The White Islander (New York: The Century Co., 1893).

[15] The White Islander, pp. 83-84.

[16] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "Pontiac's Lookout," The Chase of Saint-Castin and Other Stories (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1894).

[17] "Pontiac's Lookout," pp. 237, 239-40.

[18] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "Stephen Guthrie," Lippincott's Magazine, 29 (January-June 1882), 21-38, 122-38, 230-54, 329-46, 436-49, 540-54.

[19] "Stephen Guthrie," p. 26.

[20] "Stephen Guthrie," p. 28.

[21] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, Craque O Doom (New York: The American News Co., 1881).

[22] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The King of Beaver," Mackinac and Lake Stories (1899; rpt. New York: Garrett Press, 1969), pp. 89-118.

[23] "The King of Beaver," p. 100.

[24] "The King of Beaver," pp. 110-11.

[25] Mary Hartwell Catherwood, "The Tunnel," The Ladies Repository, 36 (August 1876), 216-19.

[26] "The Tunnel," p. 218.

[27] "The Tunnel," p. 219.

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